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LIBRARY JOKES AND JOTTINGS

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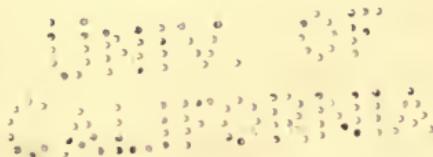
A COLLECTION OF STORIES PARTLY WISE
BUT MOSTLY OTHERWISE

BY

to me

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LONDON
GRAFTON & CO.
69 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
1914

2682
5
C1

LIBRARY
SCHOOL

NO. 2100
AUGUST 1942

PREFACE

EVERY phase of life has its humorous aspect, and in every calling, no matter how prosaic, there occur from time to time amusing incidents that serve to relieve the monotony of "the daily round." Librarianship provides a varied fund of humour, and it is remarkable that hitherto no attempt has been made to collect and arrange this kind of humour in book form.

The Public Library opens out a very wide field for the study of mankind; its frequenters are comprised of all sorts and conditions of men, drawn from all classes of society, from the "seeker of work" to the prosperous merchant, and from the "do-no-work" to the person of fashion.

Generally speaking, a Public Library

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presents an impressive aspect. Its educational and recreative functions, the style of its architecture and furniture, its rules framed according to the law of the Medes and Persians—to say nothing of the dignity assumed by many of its janitors—combine to invest it with a covering of solemnity. It is the object of the present work to lift this covering, and so reveal what may be termed the lighter and more human side of librarianship.

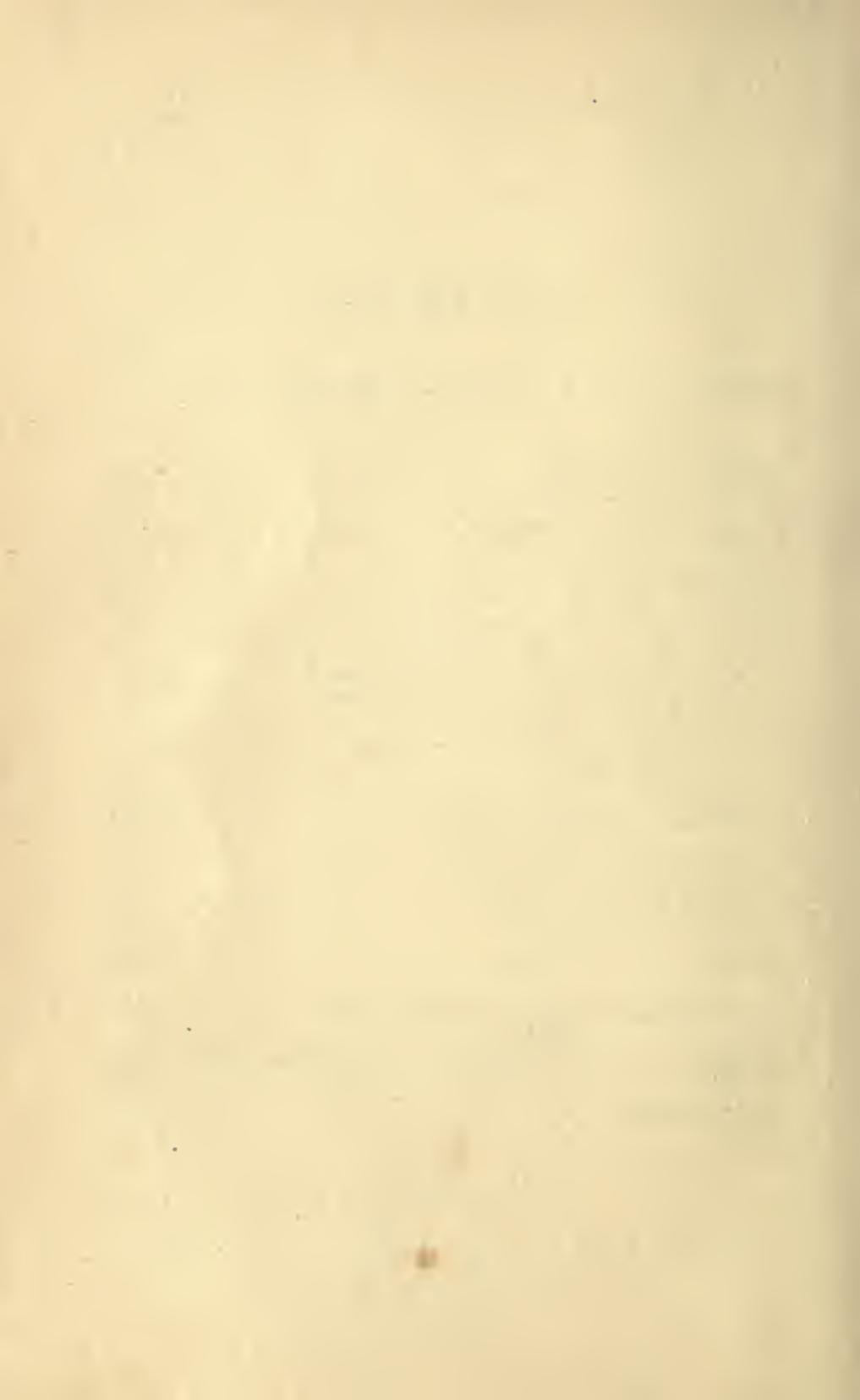
Many of the anecdotes related in the following pages are original, *i.e.* the subjects have come under the personal observation of the writer or his colleagues during the course of their professional duties. Other stories have been gleaned from various publications, among which *The Library Journal*, *The Library World*, and Spofford's *Book for All Readers* may be mentioned specially. The writer is

indebted to his colleagues, especially of the Islington and Croydon Libraries, and particularly to Mr J. D. Stewart, who has permitted him to reprint the sketch, "Reformed Library Signs."

Most of the sketches are founded on fact, although there is a certain amount of chaff mingled with the grain. Oliver Wendell Holmes has stated that "the foolishest book is a kind of leaky boat on the sea of wisdom ; some of the wisdom will get in, anyhow." How much wisdom has leaked into this book is a question for the reader to decide.

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THE LIBRARIAN AS GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER, AND FRIEND

“Everything to all men”

THE “man in the street” who frequents our library talks to his pals about our “librarian.” “He’s a decent sort o’ chap, eddicated and all that, but e’s got a easy crib, mates, reg’lar wages and no worry.” Our experience proves the truth of the statement regarding the regularity of wages ; as to the rest of the sentence—well, ask *your* “librarian.”

It is well known that everyone, excepting oneself, has a “soft job,” and the layman assumes very naturally that librarianship is a “bed of roses.” The simile is not inappropriate, for there is no bed of roses without thorns, and the librarian certainly

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does experience many pricks. He is daily plagued, teased, bothered and vexed by the public whom it is his privilege and joy to serve.

The librarian is a guide to the earnest inquirer ; he acts as a sign-post to the knowledge to be found in books. There is a great deal of truth in the statement that " the librarian should know everything about something, and something about everything." The clergyman is called upon to minister to the spiritual needs of the people, and to give advice in times of trouble ; the physician is requisitioned in times of physical sickness and infirmity ; the lawyer is asked to adjust legal difficulties ; but the librarian is consulted about every subject under the sun.

For the consolation of readers who may be priests, physicians or lawyers, it may be stated that the librarian is not always

able to supply the needs of his clients, and in such cases invariably advises them to seek the counsel of experts on the subjects in question.

Nowadays the public library is regarded as a general information bureau. Some time ago there appeared in the Boston (U.S.A.) *Transcript* the following humorous sketch of a reference librarian's day, which cleverly intermingles truth with satire :

“ At times behind a desk he sits,
At times about the room he flits.
Folks interrupt his perfect ease
By asking questions such as these :
‘ How tall was prehistoric man ? ’
‘ How old, I pray, was Sister Ann ? ’
‘ What should you do if cats have fits ? ’
‘ What woman first invented mitts ? ’
‘ Who said, “ To Labour is to Pray ” ? ’
‘ How much did Daniel Lambert weigh ? ’
‘ Should you spell it “ wo ” or “ woe ” ? ’
‘ What is the fare to Kokomo ? ’

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- ‘ Is Clark’s name really, truly Champ ? ’
- ‘ Can you lend me a postage-stamp ? ’
- ‘ Have you the rimes of Edward Lear ? ’
- ‘ What wages do they give you here ? ’
- ‘ What dictionary is the best ? ’
- ‘ Did Brummel wear a satin vest ? ’
- ‘ How do you spell “ anemic,” please ? ’
- ‘ What is a Gorgonzola cheese ? ’
- ‘ Who ferried souls across the Styx ? ’
- ‘ What is the square of 96 ? ’
- ‘ Are oysters good to eat in March ? ’
- ‘ Are green bananas full of starch ? ’
- ‘ Where is that book I used to see ? ’
- ‘ I guess you don’t remember me ? ’
- ‘ Haf you der Hohenzollernspiel ? ’
- ‘ Where shall I put this apple-peel ? ’
- ‘ *Ou est, m’sieu, la grande Larousse ?* ’
- ‘ Do you say “two-spot” or the “deuce” ? ? ’
- ‘ Say, mister, where’s the telephone ? ’
- ‘ Now, which is right, to “lend” or
“loan” ? ? ’
- ‘ How do you use this catalogue ? ’
- ‘ Oh, hear that noise ! Is that my dog ? ’

‘ Have you a book called “ Shapes of Fear ” ? ’

‘ You mind if I leave baby here ? ’

This description is not so exaggerated as it may appear at first sight. Among many posers that librarians have been asked to solve are the following :

What is the number of domestic servants employed in England, and what is the average rate of wages ?

Did Wellington and Nelson ever meet ?

What was the origin of Malmsey wine ?

Which of the Cæsars was defied ?

Can a clergyman marry himself ?

What are the good points of a Chow-chow ?

Wanted—a list of election meetings of cabinet ministers or leaders where they were questioned with regard to women’s suffrage.

What was the origin of the lines commencing “ Jack and Jill went up the hill ? ”

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In what position was the wart on Cromwell's face ?

Who was Sweeney Todd ?

What was the origin of the proverb, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush ? "

In what part of the British Isles are the tallest and heaviest people born ?

Who was Don John of Austria's monkey ?

If a train is late at a certain place, can it, according to Board of Trade regulations, go at indefinite speed to make up its time ? What regulations are there regarding curves ?

Such questions asked in good faith, it is a pleasure and an education to answer, but it sometimes happens that the librarian is used as a tool by the merely curious and the competition-solving seeker. Should the latter be fortunate enough to win a prize, he, like the butler of Joseph's time, has a

poor memory, and herein lies the humour of the situation.

The librarian must ever be a philosopher ; he must preserve a calm and unexcitable state of mind in all circumstances. If one reader wants the windows opened wide, and another wants them shut, the wise librarian will compromise by opening them half-way. The disputants will not be satisfied, but that is only to be expected. They must necessarily go outside to fight it out, and into the open air to air their views. This is not an attempt to pun ; it is wisdom born of philosophy.

A very difficult person to deal with is the ratepayer with an exaggerated sense of his own importance. The books that he requires are out. Why cannot preferential treatment be meted out to him ? It is a scandal that ordinary people should be allowed to use the library. Is the

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librarian aware that *he* is a *ratepayer*? Or it may be that his favourite periodicals are being read by other people just at the time when *he* wants to read them. He naturally assumes that these persons are neither ratepayers nor genuine readers. Is the librarian aware that *he* pays for the upkeep of the library, including the librarian's salary? If the librarian is a philosopher he will find consolation in the knowledge that what that particular ratepayer spends on the upkeep of the library, including his salary, is a very few shillings a year, and there are thousands of other ratepayers who pay more and do not complain.

Before donning his office coat, the librarian must doff all political and religious prejudices. If he is a churchman he must be as broad-minded as the "Vicar of Bray." If he is a Unionist he must

listen with patient toleration to a eulogy of the Insurance Act by a Liberal reader who is quite unbiassed—because he happens to be exempt. If he doesn't believe in women's suffrage—but enough has been said.

Generally speaking, the librarian follows the counsel given in Lord Chesterfield's *Letters* that "advice is seldom welcome, and those who want it the most always like it the least," but there are times when it is necessary for the librarian to act as counsellor. On one occasion a man, obviously intoxicated, caused a disturbance in a reading-room and was escorted by the librarian as far as the hall of the library. The official was of a kindly nature, and a member of the Church of England Temperance Society, and so he took advantage of the opportunity to give the offender some good, straightforward advice. The

man apparently listened very attentively, and then drawled out : "That's all ri', ole chap, come and 'ave a drink." The librarian declined with thanks, and went back to his desk to meditate on the ways of men.

The librarian has many friends, and into his sympathetic ears are poured stories of the joys and sorrows of family life, general difficulties, and embarrassments, which are usually of a financial character.

"I'm at loggerheads with my neighbour," one will say ; "it's all about some repairs that are needed to the fence that divides our gardens. I say that the fence is his property—and I ought to know, for my grandfather was a caretaker at a lawyer's chambers—but he says it belongs to me. Now the palings are on this side, and the cross-bars are on that. To whom does the fence belong ? "

Another has a son who, in a foolish moment, has enlisted in the army. The inquirer is a widow, and the soldier is her only son. She has great difficulty in making ends meet. If her son were only earning money at his former trade she could get along nicely. She cannot afford to buy him out. What would the librarian advise?

Necessity, it is said, is "the mother of invention," and the caller who is embarrassed financially is undoubtedly her son. He is generally only embarrassed temporarily; he has relatives in a town about fifty or sixty miles away; if he could only obtain the loan of his train fare to that place he would be all right. He has seen better days; could the librarian assist him? Sometimes by a coincidence (and the aid of a directory) he has the same surname as the librarian; if it be an

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uncommon name, so much the better for his little scheme.

Well may the librarian enter into the spirit of the psalmist of old, and say : “ Then would I flee away and be at rest.”

Some years ago it was reported that a certain subscription library had been closed—the length of time was not stated—in order that the new librarian might have an opportunity of “ mastering ” the library before issuing books to readers. In commenting upon this, *The Library World* remarked : “ This must make many a librarian’s mouth water. How can a librarian answer the usual expectations of the public, and know the contents of all his books, when he is being constantly interrupted by people coming in and out, by the necessity of supervision, by cataloguing, and committee work, etc., etc. Oh, if he could only shut the doors, and hang up a notice to this effect :

SLOCUM PUBLIC LIBRARY

CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

(N.B.—It may be for years, and it may be for ever)

*Please go away quietly, so as not to disturb the
Librarian, who is reading*

The duties of a librarian require the exercise of much patience, forbearance, and tact, and although his work is seldom recognised adequately it has its compensations, particularly if he be endowed with a sense of humour.

A book that was thought to have been stolen from a South London library twenty-two years previously was returned anonymously a few years ago. Presumably it was merely borrowed for a prolonged period, and the borrower did not wish to give the librarian the trouble of calculating the fine incurred. After this, can it be doubted that librarians are, as a body, optimistic ?

LIBRARY SKETCHES

“All sorts and conditions of men”

AMONG the many qualifications needed by the public librarian is the psychological, or—as it may be termed more appropriately—“sighcological” instinct. Public libraries are frequented by all kinds of men—and in this sense, of course, man embraces woman—each of whom has distinct peculiarities. In the following sketches a few types are illustrated, and it will be seen that librarians have unique opportunities of studying, as well as assisting, the *genus homo*.

I. THE LENDING LIBRARY

Act I.—SCENE: *A circulating library; several persons are standing at the counter, waiting to be served.*

Would-be borrower enters and elbows her way to the front.

Would-be Borrower. I want a ticket to take out books.

Assistant Librarian. You will have to fill in an application form, madam. Are you a ratepayer or householder personally?

Would-be B. Oh yes. (*Assistant hands out a ratepayer's form.*) My husband is a ratepayer.

Assist. Lib. (*Inwardly: Just what I expected—changes form for that of a non-ratepayer.*) Then you must fill in your name on the front of this form and get your husband to sign his name on the back of it.

Would-be B. But can't I do it now? I can sign my husband's name.

Impatient Borrower. Can you attend to me, please? I can't wait here all day.

Asst. Lib. One moment, please. (*Ad-*

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dressing Would-be B.) No, we must have your husband's own signature.

Would-be B. How perfectly ridiculous.

[Assistant attends to Impatient Borrower.

Another B. I'm sure there is no fine on this book; I know I did not take it out last Monday fortnight, for I always go on that day to the meeting of the Society for Alleviating Distress among Snow-clearers.

Yet another B. I want "Oliver Twist."

Asst. Lib. Oh, go to the—shelf "Dickens."
(*Nearly omits "shelf."*)

Another B. (*continuing conversation*). Besides, I have to pay twopence in tram fares every time I come to the library.

Would-be B. (*after taking time to formulate a crushing reply*). Do you call this a *free* library?

Asst. Lib. No, madam, a *public* library.

Would-be B. (*leaving application form on the counter, turns to depart*). I never heard of

such impertinence in all my life ; and my husband a *ratepayer*. You'll hear more of this—the idea !

[The same person returns next day in a subdued frame of mind, and asks for another form.]

BETWEEN THE ACTS

A borrower is found to be using another person's ticket. On being asked if he had noticed it before, he replies, " Oh, yes, I have always had it ; I thought that was the name I had to go under while I belonged to the library."

Young Lady. Will you give me the book my sister wants ?

Librarian. What book is it ?

Young Lady. Oh, I've forgotten. But she wants it very much.

Elderly Gentleman. Could you let me have Henty's *Redskin and Cowboy*, or Reed's *Fifth Form at St Dominic's* ?

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Librarian. I'm sorry—those are out—perhaps your son would like this (*holding out a book*), by Herbert Strang.

Elderly Gent. (*who has a partiality for boys' books, and doesn't like to admit it*). A-ah ! Ye-yes ! I think he would.

Miss Pretty (*meeting a friend in the library who has just selected a book bound in a brightly-coloured cloth*). Oh ! what a pretty cover ; I'm sure you will like that book.

The Friend. Yes, I find if they have nice covers they are always good.

Old Lady (*who is very conservative and has taken a fancy to a particular assistant, speaking very loudly*). Where's my nice young man ? (*Nice young man appears looking painfully conscious of the smiles and whispered remarks of colleagues and readers*). I want you to choose me a nice book—a very nice book—you know the kind I like.

Nice young man after much trouble supplies the old lady with a suitable book, inwardly hoping that she may compensate him for the banter he receives from his colleagues by remembering him in her will.

(One year later : Old lady, who was rich in this world's goods, dies, and leaves nice young man—nothing !)

ACT 2.—SCENE : *The same Library,*
a little later.

Ambiguous Borrower enters and approaches the librarian.

Ambiguous Borrower. I want a book, please ; I know it's in your library.

Librarian. What is the name of the book ?

Ambiguous B. I don't remember the name. It is quite a small book.

Lib. Do you know the name of the author ?

Ambiguous B. Let me think—it began with a W.

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Lib. That's rather vague. Perhaps you can tell me what the subject of the book was?

Ambiguous B. I don't know what subject you'd call it, but I'm sure you must know the book; it was bound in a bright red cover.

Lib. Hem! Did it contain any particular information?

Ambiguous B. Yes, it was something about the reign of Queen Elizabeth. (*Librarian produces several biographies and histories of the period.*) No, it is none of these; it is a much smaller book.

Lib. Can you give me more definite information, please?

Ambiguous B. The book referred to the standards of Queen Elizabeth. (*Another search, this time among works on national flags.*) No, this is not the kind of thing at all; what I want to find out is the

capacity of the ale gallon of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Lib. (repressing a desire to say what he thinks, fetches a small book on *British Weights and Measures*). Is this the book?

Ambiguous B. That's it—thanks!—sorry to have given you so much trouble.

II. THE REFERENCE LIBRARY

ACT. 1.—SCENE: A number of students are reading at tables in the centre of the room; the librarian is seated at a desk near the door. Notices requesting silence are displayed prominently on the walls, between the book-stacks.

Enter *Elderly Gentleman* who, after walking round the room, approaches the librarian.

Elderly Gent. (in a loud voice). Nice library you've got here.

Librarian. Yes, we have a very fair collection of books.

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Elderly Gent. (*speaking loudly*). How many volumes did you say ?

Lib. Thirty thousand. (*Noticing that the readers are being disturbed*) Can you speak a little quieter, please ?

Elderly Gent. (*speaking more loudly*). What did you say ? I'm a little hard of hearing.

Lib. (*moving towards the exit door*). Silence must be observed. (*Trys to make himself understood by signs*).

Elderly Gent. (*in a hissing whisper*). Quite so—Quite so—I beg pardon.

Lib. (*getting nearer to the exit*). The architecture in the corridor is very fine.

Elderly Gent. (*in a voice that gradually increases in tone*). I can't hear what you say. I don't know how it is, but the younger generation don't seem to speak up like they did when I was a young man.

[*Disappears with the librarian into the*

vestibule, followed by the glances of the readers, the voices gradually growing less distinct.)

Enter Younger Man

Lib. (returning). Can I help you in any way?

Younger Man. I want to find out in what books the following characters are mentioned: Becky Sharp; Cordelia; Smike; Sir Mulberry Hawk; Enoch Arden; Abraham Adams; John Silver; Mr Eden; Lalla Rookh; Dinah Morris; Miles Standish; Caleb Balderstone.

Lib. (after much time spent in research). I think that completes the list.

Younger Man. Thanks! It's for a competition in "Blank's Weekly," you know!

BETWEEN THE ACTS

Lady enters accompanied by little girl. The child is impressed by the solemn and

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quiet aspect of her surroundings, and, looking up to her mother's face, she whispers : "Mummy, is this church ? "

Very tall gentleman leans over the issue counter and looks down upon junior attendant, fourteen years of age and four-feet-six high, and asks : "Are you the librarian ? "

The "librarian-in-embryo" is as smart as he is small, and replies, "No, sir, I'm a pocket edition."

Anxious Inquirer. If you please, where can I see a directionary ?

Gentleman (who has fallen asleep over a volume of the Encyclopædia Britannica, and is being awakened by an attendant). "Don't worry, Eliza ; it's your turn to get up and light the kitchen fire."

ACT 2.—SCENE : *The same library a little later.*

Enter Lady.

Lady. Could you tell me the address of the registrar of births and deaths ?

Lib. Certainly, madam. (*Supplies the information.*)

Lady. Thank you. I wanted the information for a neighbour of mine—she's just lost her husband. Very sad case; he was such a dear man; baby was so fond of him. Speaking of baby reminds me of a little incident that—

[Librarian tries to interpose, but is unsuccessful, and is compelled to listen to a long story about the smart sayings and doings of a very ordinary child.]

Enter Gentleman

Gent. There's a factory in my neighbourhood that is a great nuisance. The smoke from the chimneys blackens everything about the place. What would you advise me to do in the matter?

Lib. (*fetching a book on law*). This book may help you.

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Gent. (*after perusing the book*). It says here that a trade fireplace or furnace must consume, as far as practicable, its smoke; now what does "as far as practicable" mean?

Lib. It's rather a moot subject; if I were in your place I should consult a solicitor.

Lady re-enters

Lady. I think I must have left my servant's insurance card on the desk. Thank you! What is your opinion of this irritating act?

Lib. A very good thing for some people; a bad thing for others. (*Thinking of baby*) Excuse me, please, I'm rather busy to-day.

CRANKS AND CROTCHETS

When Crank meets Crank then comes a tug-of-war

PERSONS with "bees in their bonnets" either retire from society and live like hermits, or remain in the company of their fellow-men in order to demonstrate to the world at large, and their little circle in particular, that something is wrong somewhere and they are the persons appointed to put it right. Many in the latter class find in religious and social institutions a convenient medium for advertising their idiosyncrasies. It is, therefore, not surprising that a large number of cranks gravitate towards the public library.

The library crank is an interesting study ; he ranges from the milder type whose eccentricity takes the form of a particular

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whim, to the more dangerous—though at times less irritating—class that must be placed in the category of insanity.

First in order comes the theological crank. Usually he is attached to some obscure minor sect, and endeavours to use the public library as a means of propagating his religious doctrines. In his mistaken zeal he tries to obtain publicity for his cause by placing tracts and bills in books and other convenient receptacles. How shocked he would be if he knew how quickly his missionary efforts are discounted through the medium of the waste-paper basket, or in providing shaving papers for the male members of the staff.

One of the patrons of a Scottish library was in the habit of adding to the formal application for books a Scriptural text. There is no evidence that the staff benefited

thereby, although it is to be hoped that they did so.

The zeal of the religious enthusiast often consumes his sense of propriety. An illustration of this is afforded in the following case: A certain book was donated to a library in North London, and shortly afterwards handbills were circulated in the district, as follows:—

Read "Christendom Astray" in —— Free Library

THE BIBLE TRUE

“Man Mortal. Immortality a Gift to be bestowed
in the *Near Future!*”

The above address will be given in the

— HALL

On Sunday, May 15, at 7 p.m.

A similar, but more advanced, type of fanatic is the “out-and-out” religious maniac. In a town in Yorkshire a man returned a library book that his wife had

borrowed, and gave the following explanation : “ Knowing that Our Lord is soon coming again, I desire to be ready, and would not like a borrowed book in the house, especially as the Scriptures are sufficient.”

Another instance is provided in a letter that was sent several years ago to a well-known librarian in South London :

“ I return you a book which my boy has had from your library. He joined it without telling me, and I have forbid him borrowing. I am a believer in the second coming of our Lord (see 2 Peter iii. 10-12), and think it likely that he will do so shortly. How could I meet Him with a clear conscience whilst I had borrowed books in my house ? May I respectfully urge upon you to read 1 Thessalonians v. 2, and flee from the wrath to come, for, sir, your business is sinful. Better be

a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord,
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”
(Psalm lxxxiv. 10).

Next in order is the faddist with a pet theory. If the library does not contain all the books on his particular subject he writes it down as a rubbish heap. Generally the subject is a very specialized one, often theological, and quite out of the way of the ordinary reader’s study ; but this is not taken into account by the faddist ; he is too self-centred in his pet theory. The correspondence of the same librarian affords a good illustration of this type.

“SIR,—I beg to suggest the following books for the Reference Department . . . as I, and I have no doubt others, want very badly to refer to these books, namely : Maskell’s (W.) *Monumenta Ritualia*, last and previous editions.

“Now that is a most useful if not necessary book for compiling a new Liturgy, as I am doing at present, and indeed for everyone wishing to study and understand his prayer-book properly.

“Also as ye have only the old edition of the companion work, viz. *Ancient Liturgy*, I would suggest the last edition should be obtained. . . .

“Also, as ye have only the old edition of H. Blunt’s *Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, I would strongly suggest that ye should get the last edition also. . . .

“I would strongly recommend that ye should get a most important liturgical work by a theologian in the Established Presbyterian Church of Scotland, called *The Church and her Services*. I forget the name of the author, but it is in the Liturgies Catalogue of the British Museum, under the head of ‘Scotland.’

“ I would also suggest that ye should get . . . *The Book of Common Order of the Presbyterian Church of England*. I saw it last Thursday.

“ I would suggest that ye should get duplicates of all the above works, and of Daniel on the Prayer-Book, of which ye have only one copy, and that ye should put the latter in the same press with the others, so that it could be obtained for reading upon Sundays. I often have a great difficulty in getting it, especially as it is often lent out.

“ I think it most inconvenient and injurious that such books should be lent out, when there are not duplicates for reference, especially as there is such a plenty of useless and injurious novels which only truckle to the vitiated taste of the idle and the silly, and encourage and pander to their frivolity; whilst the best and

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most useful works in the Greek and Latin classics and their translations, in Medicine, Theology, and Law are nearly altogether excluded. . . .

“ There is not so much use in having a fine building when most of the books which the sensible and educated part of the public specially require are not to be found there. . . . Social Science is not there, nor translations of the classics and modern languages . . . nor many Unitarian and Free Thought works. Excluding these is religious persecution.

“ Surely it is most strange and surprising that ye have not all these books in the library, and carried out the other suggestions I have given. . . .

Yours faithfully,

A CLERGYMAN.

“ *P.S.*—Surely ye ought to heat the

library more during this cold weather. It is cruel treatment of the readers to leave them nearly frozen. . . . I think the Sanatory Authorities should compel you to heat them properly."

The librarian to whom this letter was addressed, states that it is only one of many similar epistles received by him from the same correspondent.

As is indicated in the postscript of the foregoing letter, the man with a pet theory does not always concern himself with books ; sometimes his crotchet takes a more general form, such as heating or ventilation. The ventilation crank is well known in public reading-rooms. If the windows are open he feels a draught ; if they are closed the room is stuffy ; the thermometer is quite useless in such cases. When, as it sometimes happens, an open-

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air faddist comes in contact with a crank who feels a draught, then comes a tug-of-war with a library official acting as umpire.

There is more truth than literary merit in the following plaint of a worried librarian :

I surely am distracted. What is a man to do ?

I have just received a letter from Mrs Timbuctoo ;

She writes to say the reading-room is quite devoid of air,

And really, as a ratepayer, she will not languish there.

But Mr Fad, who reads *The Times* till nearly half-past one,

Is very much annoyed because the windows are undone.

Against this gross injustice he protests with
all his might,
And thinks that he, a ratepayer, should
have them closed up tight.

Now there are those who want no air, and
side with Mr Fad,
And say an open window is enough to
drive them mad ;
But there again are many more like Mrs
Timbuctoo,
Who want the windows open ; well, what
is a man to do ?

Very innocent, but disfiguring from the
bibliographical point of view, is the pastime
of the faddist who presses ferns, flowers,
and botanical specimens generally between
the leaves of a volume. Most libraries
have among their readers a crank of this
order, and, unfortunately, he generally
uses as his instrument a very heavy and

expensive type of book that is seldom asked for by other readers, and so the damage is not traced to its source without much difficulty.

The bibliographical treasure crank is an interesting type. He has discovered an old book in the penny box of a second-hand bookseller, and he brings it to the librarian for valuation. He is surrounded by an air of mystery as he approaches the librarian, and carefully draws forth, from a capacious pocket, a very dilapidated volume. Usually the book, judged from a bibliographical or literary aspect, is worth about what he gave for it—sometimes less. The librarian tries to break the truth gently, but it is a dismal failure. "Look at the date," he will say triumphantly, "1785." The librarian explains that an old book is not valuable necessarily; that it needs some special bibliographical

characteristic to give it a market value. "But look," he continues, "the *s* is printed like *f*." At last the librarian gives it up in despair and, if humorously inclined, refers the treasure-hunter to a fellow librarian or bibliophile.

Somewhat similar is the crank with an inventive mind. He creates the same atmosphere of mystery as he produces from an old bag a piece of very ordinary rubber tubing. He explains to the librarian, in strict confidence, that this particular tube, if affixed to a gas point, will reduce the gas bill by 75 per cent. ; if fitted to a water tap it will filter the water ; if laid on a carpet it will absorb the dust ; and if fastened to the insides of pneumatic tyres it will prevent punctures. He is certain there is a fortune in the so-called invention, but that is not his main object ; he is striving to benefit humanity. He

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treats the librarian as a confidant, and the latter promises not to divulge the secret until either the inventor makes his fortune, or dies. (The particular inventive genius the present writer has in mind is dead.)

Another who is striving to benefit humanity is the person who has discovered some cure, unknown to the medical profession, for a specific malady. Does the librarian suffer from the effects of indigestion ? He thought so. Well, he will tell him a little secret. And being a secret, he whispers into the librarian's ear : "Take cold water baths winter and summer, and eat an apple morning and night."

The well-worn joke relating to young unmarried curates, infatuated lady members of congregations, and embroidered slippers is not without its parallel in the library world. An assistant librarian—unmarried, endowed with good looks and a distin-

guished bearing—unconsciously sowed the seeds of the tender passion in the heart of a lady who frequented the library. The gentleman, much against his will, was the recipient of numerous neckties, etc. Seeing that her feelings were not reciprocated, the lady's love turned to hatred, but the infatuation remained, and, like the foolish moth, she continued to flutter near the candle. She declared that the gentleman in question possessed the "evil eye" and had cast a spell over her. Finally, she ordered him to remove his evil influence from her, and threatened him with sundry penalties if he failed to do so. Of course, the poor lady's mind was quite unhinged.

It was the custom of a regular reader at a certain library to check the periodicals systematically, with a view to reporting any that were overdue or missing from

their places. On one or two occasions he reported that the *ABC Railway Guide* was missing. This being a peculiar circumstance, the members of the staff were instructed to keep a strict watch on the readers, and in due time the thief was discovered—he was none other than the crank himself.

Some years ago a reader amused himself with a pair of scissors by snipping at his fellow-readers. On a junior assistant remonstrating with him, he straightway snipped the assistant's fingers, causing blood to flow. The humour of the situation lay in the fact that the janitor was off duty at the time, and it fell to the lot of the present writer to eject the maniac.

On another occasion a librarian was called to a man who sat in the reading-room, muttering audibly, and who refused to keep quiet or leave the premises. The

librarian insisted on the man leaving the building, and the following remarkable dialogue took place :

Reader. Don't be hard on me because I've only got one eye.

Librarian (*noticing the truth of the statement*). I'm sorry, but I must ask you to step outside.

Reader. I've been a soldier. Don't be hard on an old soldier.

Librarian. Will you step outside, please ?

Reader. All right. Am I to take the sack, or leave the sack ?

Librarian (*who sees a canvas sack under the table and is now convinced of the man's insanity*). Bring the sack outside by all means.

Reader. But I've come for my grandfather's clock !

The librarian ultimately pacified the

man and persuaded him to leave the building without the clock.

A man strolled into the reading-room, sat down, pulled out his pipe, and lit it for a quiet smoke. He was at once told that this was quite contrary to all rules and regulations. He sat quietly for a time, but finding it rather dull commenced to talk loudly. Again the assistant interfered by directing his attention to the "Silence is Requested" notice. Goaded beyond endurance, the man sprang up, and exclaimed, "They won't let you smoke, and they won't let you talk, but I suppose they can't prevent you from pulling your eye out," and, suiting the action to the word, he took out one of his eyes and waved it aloft in the air. It was glass!

TWISTED TITLES

“What’s in a name?”

MUCH humour is occasioned by peculiarities of book titles. Such peculiarities are often emphasized, and sometimes caused by the twists given them by readers, although in certain instances the authors themselves are directly responsible. For example, Ruskin is noted for the singularity of the titles that he bestowed on many of his books, and more than one person desiring a book on garden plants have selected *Sesame and Lilies*, an interesting study on education.

A story is told of a farmer who, contemplating the provision of better accommodation for his sheep, sent to the neighbouring library for a book dealing with

sheep and sheepfolds. The messenger returned bringing with him Ruskin's *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*. The language of the farmer can be better imagined than described when, on opening the book, he discovered the theme to be the discipline of the Church and its connection with the State.

Doubtless the English vocabulary was also extended when the reader who wanted a tide-table, received instead "letters on the laws of work," having been deceived by the title, *Time and Tide*.

Another illustration of the familiar saying, "Things are not always what they seem," was provided by a library reader who proved himself to be as witty as he was dense. After referring to the catalogue he requisitioned Frederic Harrison's *George Washington and other American Addresses*. In a little while he brought back the book

to the librarian and said: "This book does not give me what I require; I want to find out the addresses of several American magnates; I know where George Washington has gone to, for he never told a lie!"

"Have you *A Joy for ever?*?" inquired a lady borrower. "No," replied the assistant librarian, after referring to the stock. "Dear me, how tiresome," said the lady; "have you *Praed?*?" "Yes, madam, but it isn't any good," was the prompt reply.

The principal character in the following dialogue was not engaged in a flirtation, but merely requisitioning a few novels.

Young Lady (reading from list). Engaged to be married?

Librarian (referring to shelf). No, madam.

Lady. Thou Art the Man?

Lib. Yes, madam.

Lady. Thank you. Two Kisses?

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Lib. Out, madam.

Lady. After Dark?

Lib. Yes, madam.

Lady. Thanks! Love Me for Ever?

Lib. No. Wooed and Married?

Lady. No, thank you: Under Love's Rule?

Lib. No, madam.

Lady. Good-bye Sweetheart. Thank you very much.

In another library a reader asked for *The Girl he Married* (by James Grant). This happened to be out, and the assistant was requested to select a similar book. Presumably he was a benedict, for he returned triumphantly with *His Better Half* (by George Griffith).

Have you Lyall's *Won by Waiting?* said a borrower's messenger. The librarian went to the bookshelf and came back with the reply, "No, it's out!" "Oh, well,"

said the messenger, "give me any other one by Waiting."

A boy once handed to the assistant in charge of a lending library a note requisitioning the "History of Adam's Grand-father," the "Autobiography of Ananias and Sapphira," and the "Life of the Man in the Moon." "Who sent you?" said the assistant. "My big brother!" was the reply, "he's too busy to come himself." The assistant, seeing that the messenger was the victim, and not the instigator, of this foolish joke, sent back word that the borrower would have to call personally for the books.

The Public Library, however, is quite equal to meeting demands of this kind, and, in the instance quoted, the following works would have met the case :

(1) Genealogical History of the Family of Adams.

(2) A work on ancient musical instruments, containing an account of (liars) lyres.

(3) A treatise on lunar as(s)tronomy.

Librarians are often surprised by seemingly startling requests. A borrower once asked for a book *On Nothing*, which ultimately proved to be something in the form of a book of essays by Hilaire Belloc. A reader of H. G. Wells' books made an apparently impossible request when he asked to see *The Invisible Man*. While another, wishing to renew the issue of a novel he had borrowed previously, offended a lady librarian by saying: "Please extend a book, *Thou Fool*." Equally disturbing to the librarian was a request received on a post-card from a male reader, "Kindly reserve me *A Damsel or Two*."

A lady reader who had a passion for country walks used to arrange visits to charming rural spots and sought help in

her choice of them at the library. She asked the attendant to supply her with *Notable Hamlets*. Until he pointed out to her the portraits of Henry Irving, and other famous actors included in the volume, she could not believe that it had nothing to do with rambles to famous villages.

A decidedly prepossessing young lady walked into a public library, and said : "I should like 'The Red Boat,' please." The librarian searched the catalogue, and then replied : "I don't think we have such a book." The lady, blushing a little, inquired : "May the title be 'The Scarlet Yacht' ? " Again the librarian referred to the catalogue with the same result. After a little time spent in exploring the contents of her hand-bag, the lady produced a slip of paper, and said : "Oh, I beg pardon, I mean the *Rubaiyat*."

Somewhat similar was the request that

came from another young lady, who asked for "Pretty Rita." She could not remember the author, but thought it was a recent novel. The librarian suggested *Pretty Polly*, by Clark Russell, and *Pretty Michal*, by Jokai; but the lady insisted that the heroine's name was Rita, and refused all substitutes. At last the librarian had a happy thought. "Was Ruskin the name of the author?" Yes, the lady thought that it was, and *Præterita* was produced, but was quickly rejected by the borrower as being too unromantic. Finally, the young lady compromised by taking *Gretchen*, by the novelist popularly known as "Rita."

Mistakes are frequently made by readers in naming well-known books. Two of the more common occur in connection with *Every Man's Own Lawyer* and Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Nine out of every ten persons will ask for "Far from the Maddening Crowd," while ninety-nine

out of a hundred will ask for “Every Man His Own Lawyer.” More original mistakes were made by the readers who applied respectively in writing for the History of Animals, by Harry Stotle (Aristotle); Joe Cephas’ (Josephus’) Works; and Dante’s “Infernal Comedy.”

Humorous twists given to book titles by library borrowers may be illustrated by the following requests, which are but a few of many :

I come for Mr A——, will you please send him “Indecent Orders” (*In Deacon’s Orders*)?

Please renew the “Prisoner of Zena Dare” (*Prisoner of Zenda*).

Have you a novel entitled, “She Combeth not her Head” (*He Cometh not, She Said*)?

I want Braddon’s “Trial of the Servant” (*Trail of the Serpent*).

Please give me Canon Liddon’s “Broken

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Fowl" (*The Broken Vow*, by Canon Knox Little).

Have you "Swanker's" (Scharwenka's) *Polish Dances*?

Is "Valentine's Fox" (*Valentine Vox*) in?

Have you the "Essays of a Liar" (*Essays of Elia*)?

Please let me have the "Autograph on the Breakfast Table" (*Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*).

Where shall I find Feminine (Fenimore) Cooper's works?

I want "From Jessie to Ernest" (*Jest to Earnest*).

Is the Scrapegoat (*Scapegoat*) in?

Do you keep "With the Immorals" (*With the Immortals*)?

"Bunch of Screws" (*Bunter's Cruise*), please?

Is the "Stuck-up Mihister" (*Stickit Minister*) in?

“Kiss Auntie” (*Quisante*) if you please?

A reader required one of Sir Walter Besant’s novels, and, being near closing time, one of the staff went to the shelves and called out several titles. The majority were rejected with a negative, the borrower having read them previously. Finally, the assistant named the *Alabaster Box*. The reader, being unacquainted with this title, thought the assistant was having a joke at his expense, and exclaimed: “No, sir, nor Ointment Box either, and if I have any more of your impudence, I’ll report you to the librarian.”

It sometimes happens that readers lose the books they borrow. On one occasion, by a curious coincidence, the book lost was *Twice Lost*. If this book had been lost a thousand times, it would hardly compare with the case of the borrower who reported that he had lost *Ten Thousand a Year*.

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The laugh is not always on the side of the librarian ; the latter lapses occasionally into unconscious humour. An application for the return of an overdue book was made by a librarian, who commenced :

“ DEAR SIR,—I beg to inform you that *It is never too late to mend . . .*

A similar application sent from another library was worded as follows :

“ DEAR SIR,—I beg to inform you that unless the £1,000,000 *Bank Note* (Twain), borrowed from this library on April 1st, is returned within one week from this date, further proceedings will be taken to recover the same.”

Another application was made for the return of *Helen's Babies* ; the fine for their detention amounting to fourpence, which surely is a lenient penalty for so heinous an offence as kidnapping.

Some years ago an assistant in the reference department of a library in a

northern town was seen to be making a lengthy search among the biographical books. He flitted about here and there like a bee in a flower-garden, and at last attracted the attention of a superior officer. "What's the matter?" inquired the latter, "you appear to be very worried." "A reader wants the life of *Salvator Mundi*," said the assistant, "and I can't trace it. I have looked in the dictionaries under S and M, and can only find *Salvator Rosa*." "Oh, well," was the reply, "go to the theological section and get a life of Christ." Thus did the assistant learn that "Salvator Mundi" was equivalent to "Saviour of the world."

Several tales reflecting on the intelligence of the very junior library assistant are recorded. It is said of one that on being asked for a book on bells, he handed to the astonished inquirer, Black's *Shandon Bells*, with the information that it was

“one of the most recent books on the subject.” Another, when a history of Crustacea was requisitioned, looked very wise and said, “Let me see, who was Crustacea ? ” While another, when asked for a work on chickens, is credited with suggesting the “Bantam Lectures.” Evidently he was confusing a species of chicken with the *Bampton Lectures*, a series of scholarly theological works.

The lad who went to the shelf containing the books on optics to find George W. E. Russell’s essays entitled *Seeing and Hearing*, has much in common with his colleague who sought for Jerome’s *Three Men in a Boat* among the works on boating. The prize for simple ignorance, however, must be awarded to the “librarian-in-the-making” who, when the *Autobiography of Sir Walter Besant* was requisitioned, is said to have replied : “Who is the author, please ? ”

A gentleman in Paris sent to the bookbinder two volumes of the French edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The title in French is *L'Oncle Tom*, and the two volumes were returned to him marked on their backs—

L'ONCLE
TOM. I.

L'ONCLE
TOM. II.

It is alleged that many of the clergy are underpaid for their good services to the community, and the statement is confirmed by the following entry on a bookseller's invoice:

1 FAITHFUL MINISTER . . . net 2s. 6d.

Evidently “faithfulness is its own reward.”

A bookseller's assistant who was asked for *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, a book of imaginary conversations by Oliver Wendell Holmes, came back with the reply that the book was not in stock.

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“Are you quite sure ? ” said the customer, “it is a standard work.” “Yes, quite,” replied the assistant, “we keep all the cookery books together.”

This story is matched by that of another assistant to whom a lady addressed the following request: “Have you *Pepys’ Diary*, please ? ” “Sorry, madam,” replied the young man, “they’ve not sent us any this season. The fact is, madam, I think they’ve stopped publishing it.” The lady uttering a “Thank you so much ! ” turned to the door. The assistant, however, with an eye to business, rapidly reeled off the names of several well-known diary publishers, and concluded by asking if any one of them would suit. “I am afraid not,” replied the lady, “I was advised to get *Pepys’* as being the best”; and with that she left.

HUMOURS OF THE CATALOGUE

Mistakes will occur, even in the best regulated catalogues

A CATALOGUE of books is essentially utilitarian ; compared with a modern novel it might even be described as dull and uninteresting. On this account it occupies a foremost place among sleep-compelling literature, and can, therefore, be recommended to persons suffering with insomnia. Nevertheless, it has been ordained that there should be gleams of humour even in so serious a production as a catalogue, and occasionally the dulness of its pages is relieved by amusing errors that appear in some of the entries.

It is a matter of difficulty to ascertain precisely whether these errors are perpetrated by the compiler or the printer,

but it is advisable, when addressing the former, to assume that the latter is responsible, and *vice versa*.

That the printer is not devoid of humour is evident in the following entries selected from the proof sheets of a library catalogue :

Baldwin, James. The Cook Lover. (Book.)

Boldrewood, Rolf. My Rum Home. (Run.)

Cervantes Saavedra. Exemplary Hovels.
(Novels.)

Darwin, C. R. The Origin of Speeches.
(Species.)

Fowler, E. T. Fuel off Fire. (of.)

Hole, S. R., *Dean*. A Book about Noses.
(Roses.)

Hutchinson, G. W. C. Some Pints on
Learning to Draw. (Points.)

Mahaffy, J. P. Old Greek File. (Life.)

Oliphant, M. O. Cruet in Charge.
(Curate.)

Stables, Gordon. Our Friend the Fog.
(Dog.)

The facetiousness of the printer is again shown in the alterations : “Lord Ormont and his Aminta,” to “Lord Ormont and his Annuity”; a “Harvest of Wild Oats” to a “Harvest of Wild Cats”; The “Golden Face” to the “Golden Fare”; the “Princess Aline” to the “Princess Alive”; and “Mrs Caudle’s Curtain Lectures” to “Mrs Candle’s Curtain Lectures.” The domestic experience of the printer may have taught him that the last-mentioned lady could talk in the dark, but it is to be hoped that the same experience did not prompt him when he changed the “Tenth Muse” into the “Tenth Nurse.”

A suggestion of naughtiness is apparent in the alteration of Le Gallienne’s “Quest of the Golden Girl” to the “Guest of the Golden Girl,” while the substitution of “mirth” for “birth” in the case of a

novel which was described as "dealing with the struggle against the disadvantages of illegitimate mirth" makes one think, with Dr E. A. Baker, who records the incident, that the compositor must have been a choir-boy in the days of his youth.

Other instances are recorded where Brigadier Gerard became Brigadier General; a Huguenot silk-weaver, a Huguenot silk-worm; a peasant boy, a pheasant boy; the corn crops, the corn cross; mind in the lower animals, wind in the lower animals; and the transits of Venus, the transits of Venice. Hughes' *Scouring of the White Horse* was altered to Scouring of the White House, the point of which will be particularly obvious to our American friends; but the summit of absurdity was attained in the case of a treatise on conic sections which appeared as "comic selections."

In all probability it was some such

blunders as these that caused Tom Hood to pen the following skit :

“ But it is frightful to think
 What nonsense sometimes
They make of one’s sense,
 And what’s worse, of one’s rhymes.

It was only last week,
 In my ode upon spring,
Which I meant to have made
 A most beautiful thing.

When I talked of the dew-drops
 From freshly-blown roses,
The nasty things made it
 From freshly-blown noses.

And again, when to please
 An old aunt, I had tried
To commemorate some saint
 Of her clique who had died,

I said he had taken up
 In heaven his position,
And they put it—he’d taken
 Up to heaven his *physician*.”

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The printer is by no means infallible, but it would be unfair to blame him for all errors that appear in a catalogue. For example, it is unlikely that he was responsible for arranging a book on "Petrology" under "Automobiles." Again, in the following indiscriminate arrangement of author and title entries, the compiler is surely to blame.

Castle (A) in Spain.

Castle (A) Story of my Little Lady Anne.

Day (A) Harmony.

Day (A) of my Life.

This mixed arrangement calls to mind the ingenuousness of another cataloguer who economised space, as follows :

Mill on the Floss.

do. on Liberty.

Punches, Dies, etc.

do. History, by Spielmann.

The last entry, it will be noted, refers to the "king of humorous periodicals."

Mistakes are sometimes caused through ignorance of printers' marks, or careless proof-checking. In a certain catalogue, the entry,

Proctor (R. A.) *Mysteries of Time and Space.*

was incorrectly spaced, and the person who checked the proof wrote in the margin, "more space," omitting to enclose the instruction in a circle. Consequently the entry appeared :

Proctor (R. A.) *Mysteries of Time and More Space.*

This incident reminds one of the story of the amateur proof-checker who desired to correct the entry,

KINGANDQUEEN.

He wrote in the margin, "Please put more space between King and and and and and Queen." Some little time elapsed before

the worried look or the face of the printer gave place to a gleam of intelligence.

Blunders in cataloguing are sometimes made, and fortunately corrected before they attain the dignity of print. In some libraries junior assistants are employed in writing the “rough copy,” and such entries as the following have been found :

Buchanan (Robert). *Fleshy (Fleshly)*
School of Poetry.

Days near Paris ; by Augutsus (*Augustus*)
Hare.

The Destruction of Fish by the Action
of Infernal (*Internal*) Parasites.

Harbottle (Thomas). Dictionary of His-
torical Illusions (*Allusions*).

The abbreviations used in the description
of books are often amusing when viewed
in the light of their context. For example :

Jack at Sea, *ill.* (meaning illustrated).
The nature of poor Jack’s illness is apparent,

but it is necessary to enter into fuller detail regarding that of :

A Wanderer in Holland, *cold. ill.* (coloured illustrations).

The traveller may have been affected by the waterways, but his complaint is not so drastic as that indicated in a

Handbook on the Distillation of Alcohol, *ill. dia.* (diagrams).

Modesty forbids a translation of the complaint here suggested, but temperance advocates may be able to point a moral. On the other hand, their arguments may be weakened slightly by such entries as that respecting a biography of

Benjamin Disraeli, *ill. port.* (portraits).

In this case it would seem that port was recommended as a tonic.

The examples quoted have been extracted from public library catalogues,

but the bookseller's catalogue also provides similar humorous instances, as in :

The Inn by the Shore. *Pub.* at 2s. 6d.

At first sight it appears that the recent licensing legislation has reduced the commercial value of public houses practically to nil, but—"pub." is merely the abbreviation for "published." It is presupposed that the reader has some knowledge of slang, which will be necessary in order to appreciate the following, as well as the foregoing, example :

True Stories of Crime. *Clean Cop.* (Copy).

Many cataloguers append notes to the main entries in their catalogues, and this annotation considerably widens the field for the humorist. Here are a few specimens :

A Consideration of the Question, Is Life worth Living ?

Cannot fail to stimulate thought. The

author died soon after the book was written.

An Ideal Husband.

Essentially a work of fiction, and presumably written by a woman (unmarried).

Insect Pests.

A useful book on a worrying subject.

Gives information concerning these pests ; how to know them by illustrations, and how to destroy the same. (It will be noticed that there is some doubt as to whether the insects or the illustrations are to be destroyed.)

Aspects of Home Rule.

Political, not domestic.

New Vegetarian Dishes.

These dishes are of the edible kind, and will be found in the cookery, and not in the pottery, department of the library.

An Angler's Season.

An interesting book on a doubtful subject, whichever way it is viewed.

The present work deals with fish, and has no connection with the marriage market.

There is another kind of humour to be found in a catalogue of books that, curiously, is not dependent upon the blunders or design of either compiler or printer. This type is illustrated in the following list of apposite book-titles and authors, which may be verified by reference to catalogues :

- First Aid to the Injured ; by Drinkwater.
- Hygienic Value of Colour ; by White.
- One Thousand Salads ; by Green.
- Lane and Field ; by Wood.
- Where to find Ferns ; by Heath.
- Scripture Zoology ; by Catlow.
- Natural Evidence of a Future Life ; by Bakewill.
- Village Sermons ; by Church.
- Money and its Relation to Prices ; by Price.
- The State and Pensions in Old Age ; by Spender.

The Liquor Problem ; by Wines.

Night Side of Nature ; by Crowe.

Rowing ; by Rowe.

Rod and River ; by Fisher.

Exmoor Streams ; by Wade.

Pheasants, Turkeys, and Geese ; by Cook.

Studies in Plant Form ; by Lilley.

Disturbing Elements ; by Birchenough.

Manufacture of Gas ; by Burns.

Studies from the Russian Ballet ; by Hoppé.

A Tramp through Switzerland ; by Leggett.

White Wings ; by Black.

From Post to Finish ; by Smart.

In the Permanent Way ; by Steel.

Poetical Works ; by Poe.

Many more instances could be quoted, but enough have been mentioned to show that the pages of a catalogue of books are more productive of humour than many readers suppose.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR BORROWERS OF BOOKS

“Who goeth a-borrowing goeth a-sorrowing”

1. Thou shalt not buy what thou canst borrow.
2. Thou shalt take care of thine own books, for thy babies and thy puppies will find as much delight in borrowed books as playthings.
3. Thou shalt not cut the leaves of a book with a butter-knife, nor decorate the margins with jam in imitation of the old illuminated manuscripts.
4. Remember that the most artistic form of appreciation is to repair the torn leaves of a book with postage

stamp edging, and to arrange the red and green lines alternately.

5. Honour the opinions of an author as expressed in his book, but shouldst thou disagree with his views, pencil thine own notes in the margins. By so doing thou wilt not only give evidence of thy vast learning, but will irritate subsequent readers who will, unmindful of thy superior knowledge, regard thee as a conceited ass.
6. Thou shalt choose thy books from amongst those most worn. Shouldst thou be dissatisfied with their contents thou wilt have the pleasure of knowing that many of thy neighbours have been "had" likewise.
7. Thou shalt consult the librarian when thou knowest not what thou re-

quirest. Should he be unable to assist thee, substitute "in" for "con."

8. Thou shalt not pay fines on principle (current cash is much to be preferred).
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against the library assistant, saying : "He taketh the best books and reserveth them for his friends."
10. Thou shalt not covet the books that thy neighbour hath appropriated.

THE JUVENILE READER

“Children and fooles speake true”

JUVENILE readers, like their elders, sometimes exhibit peculiar tastes in literature. A little girl once asked for a nice book, and was shown several that seemed to be suitable. She did not appear to be satisfied with the selection, however, and on being asked what kind she liked, she replied: “If you please I want a sad one with something in it to make you cry.”

On the other hand, many children will reject books that savour of a goody-goody character. Mr Spofford, in *A Book for all Readers*, tells a story of a boy who, on returning a certain book to a library, said: “I don’t want any more of them books. The girls is all too holy.” This boy illus-

trates a type of juvenile reader that is not uncommon in public libraries.

Children often confuse the titles of popular books, and will ask for such things as Allsop's Fables, Buck and Deer Chief, Good Liver's Travels, Helen's Dairy, Holly-berry Finn, From Powder Admiral to Monkey, Sweet Family Robinson Crusoe, Jimmy's Screws, Old Friends with Clean Faces, Rusty Diamonds, Through the Dark Condiment, Turnip (Bunyip) Land, and Sand-pits at Merton.

Most of these can be translated easily, but a more difficult case occurred when a girl requisitioned "Watercress." The librarian told her that a book of that name was not in the library, but the girl persisted in her request. A school-fellow, she said, had borrowed it only a week or two ago, and had told her it was a nice book. Eventually a solution of the

problem was found in Mrs Molesworth's *Lettice*.

A lesson in perseverance was given unconsciously by a girl who asked for the *Crown of Success*, a tale by A.L.O.E. On being told the book was out, she replied, "Please give me one by the same author—*Try Again.*"

The following story has been told before, but it is worth repeating: A boy who collected moths was in search of a book on the subject. Having studied the catalogue carefully, he asked for Dr —'s *Advice to Young Mothers*. This anecdote is similar to that of the little girl, the proud possessor of a new doll, who selected a book on dolphins.

"If you please I want the Fool's Index," said a young scholar. "The Fool's Index," repeated the librarian, thinking that she had not heard aright, or that someone

was trying to make a fool of the child. "Who told you to ask for it?" "My teacher," was the reply. "I've got to write an *Essay*, and teacher said the *Fool's Index* would help me." The puzzled look on the face of the librarian gave place to a smile as she took from the shelf Poole's *Index to Periodical Literature*.

Children are generally ready with excuses, but some cannot produce such convincing evidence as a certain small boy who was reprimanded for keeping a book over the time allowed. "If you please, miss," said he, "I couldn't bring my book back on Friday. I had my tooth out." He thereupon opened his mouth to reveal the gap, but all that the librarian could see was a length of red tongue.

Juvenile messengers are responsible for many amusing sayings. One of the most common of peculiarly worded messages is :

“ Please, father says, will you send him a library ? ” As a rule it is only a very small part of the library that is sent.

In a recent issue of the Chicago *Dial* a story is told of a small boy who rushed, breathless, into a certain public library and delivered the following message : “ Mother says, please, to send her Browning’s pair o’ scissors ! ” The librarian translated this into a request for *Paracelsus*.

Somewhat similar is the story of the boy who returned one of Hugo’s works, and said, “ Father has sent back the naughty dame (*Notre Dame*) and wants one less miserable (*Les Misérables*). ”

A few years ago a child went to the delivery desk at an American library, and said to the lady librarian, “ Please, teacher, my school teacher says for me to get something about Andromine. ” “ Andromine ? ” “ Yes, ma’am. ” “ Well, tell me something about Andromine. ” “ Oh, she

was a lady chained to a rock and another boy came and got her off."

In another library a youngster returned two books that his elder brother had borrowed, and expressed his message as follows: "Here's the library books me brother had out, and he wants you to stop his circulation."

"Please, ma'am," said a small girl to the lady assistant, "is *The Blameless Woman* in the library? Father has been looking for her for a long time."

A writer in a recent issue of *The Book Monthly* tells a story of a youthful messenger who handed in a slip of paper on which was written the following requirement: "England's by-legends." This proved to be a puzzle until the librarian discovered its phonetic resemblance to *Ingoldsby Legends*.

Another application was made for a book, the title being given as "The In-

sanity of Jesus." At first sight this appeared to be blasphemous, but it was only another instance of a phonetic mistake on the part of the juvenile applicant. The book required was *The Insanity of Genius*, by Nisbet.

The application form that has to be filled in prior to the issue of a borrower's ticket presents certain difficulties to the child mind. As a general rule, the juvenile reader must write his or her name, etc., on the form provided, and submit a recommendation signed by a parent or school teacher. On one occasion a girl, foreseeing a difficulty in obtaining her mother's signature, filled in both parts of the form, writing on her parent's behalf as follows :

I, *Louisa Smith* of 1 *Blank Street*,
being a *Mother-in-law* in terms of
Rule 14 or 28, desire to recommend
Louisa Smith for a Ticket.

The legal touch, of course, revealed the deception.

What was thought to be a similar case of forgery occurred when a small boy tendered a form, duly signed. The parent's signature was written so badly that the assistant queried it, thinking that the boy had filled in both sides of the form. A few days afterwards an indignant mother came into the library and, producing her marriage certificate, explained that she had brought her "marriage lines to show that she could write 'er own name correct." As additional evidence she produced a Christmas club card from a local grocer to prove that she had lived in the neighbourhood for some time, and had "always bin reg'lar in 'er payments." Needless to say, the boy was admitted a library borrower without further question.

A lad returned a form that was endorsed on the back by his mother. As

his father's name appeared in the directory he was told that his father must sign the form. His reply was: "If you please, sir, he's dead at present."

This story is supplemented by that of the youngster who presented a similar form to a library in North London, and explained: "Father ain't filled in this form as 'e don't know 'is resurrection number." Of course, he should have said "registration," for, in this instance, father was alive at present, and, therefore, his resurrection number was not due.

On another occasion a small girl asked for a form for mother. The assistant gave the form to the child, at the same time telling her that it would have to be signed on the back by a ratepayer. The girl, after a moment's reflection, said: "Did you say it would have to be signed with a red pen?" Query: Was the child or the assistant's enunciation at fault?

It is, of course, only a boy who could be responsible for the following dialogue :

Messenger. Please, I want a nice novel.

Library Asst. Who is it for, a lady or gentleman ?

Messenger. It ain't for neither.

Library Asst. Who is it for, then ?

Messenger (bluntly). My mother, o' course !

The librarian of a certain library was once startled by a boy who, rushing into the library, exclaimed : "Please, mister librarian, a man wots workin' up on the roof 'as bin and gorn an' dropped a 'ammer through the skylark." The librarian, however, quickly regained his composure, being inured to shocks by the operations of suffragette militancy.

To the child who has never before seen such an article of furniture, the card catalogue is a cabinet of mystery. It

presented no mystery, however, to a small child who went with her mother into a library in the United States. She begged for a penny to put in the slot in the catalogue case so that she might get some gum.

Another little patron of the same library, who had been collecting labels from spools, gave them to the librarian. On being asked what they were for, he said : "They are on the backs of all the books in the library, and I thought you would need them."

It is customary in most libraries to insist on youthful borrowers having clean hands before being allowed to handle books. A boy was sent recently from a London library to wash his hands. He went out into the street, and in the course of a very short time reappeared, wiping his hands on his trousers ; he had made

use of a neighbouring puddle. Similar, but apparently more serious, was the plight of another small boy to whom the same request was made. After glancing at his dirty hands, he looked up and said to the lady librarian: "It ain't no good, miss, it won't come off." We fancy that his excuse likewise did not "come off."

Much less cute was the youngster who entered another public library and asked an assistant for a membership ticket. "You must apply in the children's library," said the assistant; "walk down that passage and enter the first door on the right." Within an hour the small boy, who believed that he had followed the instruction implicitly, was telling his story to the interested assistant in charge of the juvenile department at the branch library two miles away.

THE (S)NEWSROOM THE LOAFERS' LAMENT

Who will bell the custodian?

SOME years ago the question as to the desirability of the newsroom as an adjunct to the Public Library was raised. A few library authorities have been bold enough to dispense with this department, assuming that the room is used largely by loafers, and deeming it inadvisable to provide for that undesirable class at the expense of the ratepayer. At the present day the newspaper is so cheap, and most people can, and do, buy copies for themselves, that there seems to be a good reason for this policy.

The abolition of the newsroom, however, may be called in question by some, and by

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none more than the loafer, who feels out of place in an ordinary reading-room, and, therefore, has a grievance. In the interests of justice and charity we think it only fair that the point of view of Weary William and Tired Timothy should be stated.

SCENE: *The hall of a library where the newsroom has been transformed recently into an extension of the reference department. Advertisements of "situations vacant" are displayed on one of the walls. Enter two gentlemen of no occupation.*

Weary W. Lookin' fur a job, mate?

Tired T. Wot do you think? Where's the bloomin' snewsroom?

Weary W. Think they've done away with it. There's bin some halterations since I come back from 'oppin'.

Tired T. Wot ! Done away with the snewsroom ! Garn, who're yer gittin' at ?

Weary W. 'Ard, ain't it ? Arter wot the likes of us 'as done fur them insti-tootions. That's gratitood, that is.

Tired T. Gratitood be blowed. If it wasn't fur us they'd 'ave 'ad ter put up their shutters afore this. Ain't we stuck to 'em thro' thick and thin ; goin' there of a mornin' afore some of yer so-called gentry is up, an' stayin' there till ten at night ; just goin' out ter git a bit o' grub and a little summat to wash it down.

Weary W. Yus, and we'd stay there all the blessed night if they didn't chuck us out.

Tired T. Wot der people pay rites for if it ain't ter pervide light literatoor fur us 'ard-workin' chaps, and it is 'ard work, ain't it, tryin' ter keep awake and pertend ter read ?

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Weary W. Them ritepayers is bloomin' mugs. That's wot I sez.

Tired Tim. Not 'alf they ain't. See the snewsroom fall down like a pack o' cards afore their eyes, and keep their mouths shut.

Weary W. Pity they can't keep their noses shut. Only t'other day I 'eard some swell say, "I wish ter goodness that 'ere newsroom didn't smell so hobjectionable."

Tired T. In course they smell, and fur why? A bit o' bacca would improve 'em, but bless yer, the orthorities won't allow no smoking, let alone give yer a pipeful o' shag. I ought ter 'ave bin a councillor, and don't yer forgit it.

Weary W. Wot O! Then p'raps the cheers 'ud be more comfortable, and we'd 'ave 'ot corfee an' rolls of a mornin', Mister Councillor Timothy.

Tired T. I don't want none o' yer sarcasm.

Weary W. All right, mate, keep yer 'air on. Wot's the good of a snewsroom if they don't give yer summat t' eat?

Tired T. That's wot I sez. I told the bloke in buttons abaht it t'other week, and he sez, "I wonder what next you'll want; 'ungry, are yer," sez he, "why don't yer git a job; there's the hadvertisements in the 'all."

Weary W. That's yer "Jack in Orfice." 'Spose 'e meant them patent food hadvertisements. Good job 'e didn't say it ter me.

Tired T. Well, I give 'im a piece of me mind, an' told 'im wot I'd do if it wasn't fur the braid on 'is coat. Them 'ere offishals want takin' down a peg or two.

Weary W. You've 'it it, mate. You'd think by the side that some of 'em put on, that they pide us instead of "versy

visa." Tain't so very long ago I was a-sittin' readin' *The Labourer's Friend* an' chewin' it over with me eyes shut, when up comes one o' the starf, hoffishus like, an' sez ter me, "Oi, git out o' that" —and it a rainin' cats and dawgs. There's gratitood fur yer.

Tired T. Gratitood! There ain't no sich word. Libarians ain't got none, any'ow. Where would some o' them there chaps be if it wasn't fur us? Don't yer common sense tell yer they wouldn't 'ave so much ter do, and would git the chuck.

Weary W. Looks ter me, mate, as 'ow they want ter give us the chuck, doin' away with wot you may call a soshal hinstitootion. Takes the bloomin' biscuit, don't it? Ask for a newspiper and they gives yer a Encyclometer.

Tired T. So long, mate—it's enuff ter drive yer ter work.

REFORMED LIBRARY SIGNS

“Eyes to the blind”

IT is a psychological commonplace that a perfectly obvious notice becomes invisible through custom, and sometimes even by reason of its obviousness. This phenomenon can be observed any day in any Public Library, and leads to a certain amount of unpleasantness and friction. Yet the remedy is simple enough: you simply have to get people to read your notices, and in order to do this, all you have to do is to make them attractive. I append a few examples of one way by which this end may be attained. Let us call on the aid of the Muses! Surely one of them at least will be disengaged for a few minutes.

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Take the notice most frequently used in libraries and see what we can do with it.

Let Jack and Cora bill and coo
Like turtle-doves new-nested ;
But let them also keep in view
That SILENCE IS REQUESTED.

The parties mentioned really don't need this reminder to keep quiet. But the beauty of this notice is that it calls the attention of everyone, in a gentle, insinuating fashion, to the existence of the regulation. Still, for the sake of variety it might be advisable to have other versions also placed in view. For example :

Sit here and read, and read again,
Until you have been rested ;
But kindly don't forget to note
That SILENCE IS REQUESTED.

Rules against loud talking have always

been a source of worry. The awful experience of a now famous librarian should give us pause. In his youthful days the library in which he laboured was placarded with the notice: "Audible Conversation is not Permitted." Having occasion one day to rebuke some obviously illiterate delinquents, he sallied forth and (paraphrasing for their benefit) enounced the following amazing paradox:

"Talking aloud is not allowed!"

We have taken warning from this, and will leave the notice alone. Smoking, however, can be dealt with more safely. "Fragrant cloud" and "not allowed" are a great temptation; but we will be brave and try another:

Put out your "tuppeny," tap your pipe
Unless you would be gibbeted;
For note, O smokers! young or ripe,
That SMOKING IS PROHIBITED.

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After all, why should we resist the temptation :

Ah ! burn no more the “ sovrane herb,”

Dispel the fragrant cloud,

And while you’re here your craving
curb—

SMOKING IS NOT ALLOWED.

Then here is a notice that should be placed near the entrance to the building :

We’ll lend you a volume for Sunday,

We’ll answer all questions off pat ;

And all that we ask is that one day

You’ll PLEASE WIPE YOUR FEET ON
THE MAT.

It will be noted that this sign recognises the hopelessness of expecting anyone to make a practice of it. That is the beauty of most of these notices. They are pleading rather than dogmatic.

Turning our attention to the “ indicator ” for a moment (for the benefit of

the libraries using them), we suggest the following notice :

RED IS OUT AND BLUE IS IN,
"Tis a paradox in paint :
For if it's red it can't be read,
And if it's blue *you* ain't.

The cheering value of a notice similar to this one would be immense, and would fortify readers in the task of compiling gigantic lists of "wants." The example given could be used, but it needs polishing up, the fourth line is hardly literary.

It would never do to provide a notice for the "indicator" and ignore the open access library. How will this one do ?

The books I need
Are never "In"
(*Am I accurst?*)
"Who runs may read"
What truth herein!—
He gets there first.

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I think the foregoing are sufficient to give a rough idea of the kind of thing suggested. It need not be (and as a rule, won't be) polished verse : the only essential is that it should call attention to some regulation or notice. In most of the above examples, the moral is pointed ; but even this is not absolutely necessary. For example :

WAY IN ➞

Enchanted path where hope runs high
With ne'er a doubt.

“ What's that you say ? . . . ‘ None
in to-day ! ’ ”

← WAY OUT.

ADVERTISING UP-TO-DATE

He who advertises not, is lost

AT the close of a busy day the librarian returned home tired and worried. The issues were satisfactory, indeed, more than satisfactory, for the supply of books was not equal to the demand. That day borrowers had been clamouring insistently for new books, and the book-fund was at a very low ebb. The difficulty was that the library rate of one penny in the pound was quite inadequate, and the ratepayers refused to sanction an increase. The public wanted books, but the public did not want to pay for them. Therefore the librarian was worried.

The librarian leaned back in his well-worn arm-chair and sought distraction

from his troubles by the aid of his favourite books. A volume of *The Library Journal* lay open before him, and his attention was arrested by the following note : " An advertising circular with a picture of the New York Public Library has been recently issued, and presents the following interesting information :

" This notable example of the best in architecture was officially opened on May 23rd. Of course you will visit it. You cannot fail but note the beauty of it all, and the thoroughness of its equipment. Every possible aid for the comfort and convenience of the public has been considered. All the attendants are equipped with

O'Sullivan Rubber Heels.

Do you wear these comfortable and healthful aids to

Quiet efficiency?

“ Ah ! ” mused the librarian, “ this is an age of advertisement—a capital idea—why didn’t I think of it before ? Perhaps I could prevail on some enterprising firm of publishers to supply books to the library, free of charge, if advertisements were inserted in them. Now, what is wanted is a nice, artistic, unobtrusive style of thing—not big, glaring, ugly advertisements.”

Comfortably settling himself in his arm-chair, the librarian continued to meditate.

In an absent-minded way the librarian turned his revolving book-case, abstracted a volume of Shakespeare, and opened it at “ Hamlet ” :

Marcellus. How is’t, my noble lord ?

Horatio. What news, my lord ?

Hamlet. O, wonderful !

Horatio. Good, my lord, tell it.

Hamlet. No ; you’ll reveal it.

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Horatio. Not I, my lord, by heaven.

Marcellus. Nor I, my lord.

Hamlet. How say you, then; would
heart of man once think it ?

But you'll be secret ?

Horatio. } Ay, by heaven, my lord.
Marcellus. }

Hamlet. There's ne'er a breakfast bacon
that can equal Hogg's.

Horatio. There needs no ghost, my lord,
come from the grave
To tell us this.

“Strange,” muttered the librarian.
“I’ve read about the Shakespeare-Baconian
theory, but—— !

The librarian closed the book and took
up the Works of Longfellow. Scanning
the pages, his eye lighted upon “Ex-
celsior,” and he commenced to read :

The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed

A youth who bore, 'mid snow and ice
A banner with this good advice

Buy Foot's Corn-Cure.

And so on to the last verse :

A traveller, by the faithful hound,
Half-buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping in his hand of ice
That banner with the good advice

Buy Foot's Corn-Cure.

Rubbing his eyes to make sure he was awake, the librarian re-read the poem. Surely this version differed from the original ; how strange he had not noticed it before.

“ My knowledge of modern literature must be getting rusty,” thought the librarian, as he replaced Longfellow’s Poems and took down a volume of Hood’s Works. Opening it at random he happened upon the well-known poem, “ I re-

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member, I remember," and read as follows :

I remember, I remember,
The house where I was born,
Dad got the furniture, you know,
On hire system from *Horne*.
Horne never came a wink too soon,
And if Dad couldn't pay,
He never would, like other firms,
Have borne the chairs away !

(It will pay you to call at our commodious showrooms in High Street.
Walk in, please—walk out, pleased.)

I remember, I remember,
The roses got from *White's*,
The vi'lets and the —

" But I don't remember," murmured the librarian—" there's something wrong somewhere. However, I'll feed my mind a little on Dickens before going to bed."

Taking up *Oliver Twist*, the librarian read :

" In pursuance of this determination,

little Oliver, to his excessive astonishment, was released from bondage, and ordered to put himself into a clean shirt. (*Coller's shirts at 3s. 6d. do not shrink, and last longest.*) He had hardly achieved this very unusual gymnastic performance (*lessons in physical training are given each evening at the Extension School*) when Mr Bumble brought him, with his own hands, a basin of gruel (*Scott's Oatmeal is the best*) and the holiday allowance of two ounces and a quarter of bread (*Baker's bread is the staff of life*)."

"Ah!" mused the librarian, "this *is* an age of advertisement—how stupid of me not to have thought of it before. Of course, I have persuaded some enterprising firm of publishers to supply books, with advertisements, free of charge. Oh! what a twist I've got in my neck." With that he awoke, and a volume of Shakespeare fell to the floor.

BOOKS AS FURNITURE

“No furniture so charming as books, even if you never open them or read a single word”

THE results of popular education are not so disappointing as some pessimists would have us believe. To-day every home that is worthy of the name shows signs of culture in the possession of a piano and a library. The latter may be merely a shelf of books in the general living room—the work of an amateur carpenter supplemented by sundry visits to the penny box of a second-hand bookshop—or it may be an elaborate collection of books housed in one or more rooms.

Whether the inmates are readers or not, the fashion of “culchaw” demands the presence of books in every home. Books

are as necessary in the furnishing of a house as a wardrobe or coal shovel; they give the finishing touch, and invest the home with an air of refinement that even a collection of bric-a-brac cannot supply.

Books are furniture—not merely in the sense that they can be used as cushions, footstools or trouser-presses as occasion requires—for many can be purchased at the present day on the hire system of monthly payments, or the “you marry, we do the rest” principle. When furnishing a library it is desirable from a decorative point of view to foster the idea that the books are furniture, and to subdue the contention of a few specialists that books are literature.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, in *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*, puts the matter very clearly, thus: “Of course, you know there are many fine houses where the library is

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a part of the upholstery, so to speak. Books in handsome binding kept locked under plate-glass in showy dwarf book-cases are as important to stylish establishments as servants in livery, who sit with folded arms, are to stylish equipages. I suppose those wonderful statues with the folded arms do sometimes change their attitude, and I suppose those books with the gilded backs do sometimes get opened, but it is nobody's business whether they do or not, and it is not best to ask too many questions."

A story is told of a millionaire who built a palatial residence, and who desired to impress the county gentry with his book-lore. The architect was instructed to set apart a large room as the library, and when this was ready for the internal fittings, he approached the millionaire on the subject. "Measure up all the available

space," said the millionaire, "get what book-shelves are necessary, and order from the bookseller so many yards of books to fit, and mind they have pretty covers." The architect did not pose as a literary critic, and so he sent the order to the bookseller, exactly as directed, leaving the selection of books to the latter. Now it happened that the bookseller had just bought a large stock of remainders of a third-rate novel, and, knowing something of the millionaire's literary pretensions, he thought he saw a way of making a good profit out of the transaction. He measured up the remainders and found they came to the stipulated number of yards; he then had them rebound in gorgeous bindings, lettered with the names of authors and titles of classical and modern standard works, and duly despatched. The millionaire is

exceedingly proud of his library, and it is very unlikely that he will ever discover the trick that was played upon him.

The moral of this story is obvious. The objects of a library in a scheme of furnishing a house are to secure artistic effect and to impress casual visitors with the seemingly vast learning of the owner.

“Through and through the inspired leaves,

Ye maggots, make your windings ;
But, oh ! respect his lordship’s taste,
And spare his golden bindings.”

If possible, the number of books should be sufficient to cover the walls of a room, as a saving of wall-paper is thereby effected.

The books should be arranged on the shelves according to their sizes and the colours of their bindings. Librarians are wont to group books under subjects and authors, but this tends to destroy artistic

symmetry, and serves no useful purpose other than facilitating reference. To be able to find a particular book when a neighbour calls to ask for the loan of it, is a doubtful advantage.

Due care should be exercised in the selection of covering materials. A rich man who dwelt north of the Tweed ordered a quantity of books. The bookseller knew that they were required for effect rather than use, and so he asked his customer whether he would like to have them bound in "Morocco" or "Russia." "Hang it all, man," said the book-buyer, "get them bound in Glasgow!"

The colours of the bindings should be as bright as possible, and should harmonize with those of the wall-paper and upholstery generally. Rows and rows of books in darkly covered bindings exert a depressing influence on the mind, and

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it is possible that if this mattter had been brought to the notice of the late Sir W. S. Gilbert, he would have expressed it somewhat in this way :

The books on the shelves of my library
(Said I to myself—said I),

Shall be drest in light covers as bright
as can be

(Said I to myself—said I).

No need, when one's gloomy, to go to a
rink,

Or when feeling mournful to take to
strong drink ;

Try Darwin or Dickens in calf—salmon
pink

(Said I to myself—said I).

Bibliophiles will patch up old original
book-covers, and say that it is as wicked
to put new covers on old books as it is
foolish to put new wine into old bottles ;
but bibliophiles look upon books as books
and not as furniture.

PERVERTED PROVERBS

“The price of wisdom is above rubies”

A book in the hand is worth two on the shelf.

It is an ill book that does nobody any good.

Select books in haste and repent at your leisure.

Be slow in choosing a book and slower in reading it.

A book should not be judged by its binding.

Two books are better than one.

Returned in time saves “fine.”

Fine books make “fined” borrowers.

A library book is better out than in.

It is easier to criticise a book than to write one.

Better ill-fed than ill-read.

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It is a poor book that is not worth the candle.

Many hands make dirty books.

Spare the puppy and spoil the book.

Never buy to-morrow the book you can borrow to-day.

The reader proposes, the librarian disposes.

It's a long tale that has no ending.

EXAMINATION ANSWERS AND QUERIES

“A little learning is a dangerous thing”

THE duties of an examiner are often arduous, but his labours are sometimes lightened by gleams of humour thrown here and there among the answers to the questions. This kind of humour is very one-sided, for mercifully the much-tried candidate responsible for it is generally left in blissful ignorance of his misapplied wit. The following are a few specimens of blunders committed by candidates at examinations in library lore :

“Bibliography is that science which relates to the study of the Bible.”

In a scheme of classification “Medicine

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would be classed as a sub-division of Physics.”

“Classification by form is to classify formally, or as a matter of course.”

“An epic is a literary form written in verse and which teaches us some lesson not necessarily of a moral nature.”

“Chatterton was a very young poet who discovered an old piece of poetry, entitled the ‘Death of Sir Charles Bawdin.’ This he gave to the world as his own poetry.”

“Dickens had the dramatic function (? faculty) well developed.”

“Victor Hugo’s best known work is ‘William Tell.’”

“Wilkie Collins deals with the novel of sensation, but his characters do not live long.”

“Dante is an exceedingly bitter writer; he takes you into hell and describes Satan and his angels. He wrote his play for the stage.”

The Divine Comedy is “a play which could be acted by the priests on the steps of a church for the benefit of the poorer classes.”

“Allegory is writing highly coloured, as Pope’s works.”

“Common-sense school. A designation applied to the school of poets of which Dryden was the head and Pope the tail.”

“Pedagogy is the study of feet.”

Disraeli “foretold the occupation of Cyprus. There seems little doubt but that he made political events to coincide with what he had foretold in his novels.”

“Folklore is giving to animals and things human sense.”

Dickens “was saturated in the lower ebbs of society.”

Macaulay “grafted on many idiosyncrasies which he got from his delving in German.”

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“Anthology is the study of insects.”

“Codex Vaticanus. Codex was the name given to an edition of the Bible. Thus we have the Psalmorum codex of Fust and Shoeffler and many others. The Codex Vaticanus was an edition of the Bible, printed in Latin, for the use of the Vatican in Rome. It was printed in the sixteenth century.”

“A collection of works of any author is termed an Anthropology.”

“In Beowulf the deep sonorous descriptions of gloomy, desolate country is graphically described.”

“The pros and cons of Sunday opening of libraries are that a few are open, and many are closed.”

“Watermarks are stains in paper caused through the action of water or damp. They can be removed by a solution of warm water and alum.”

SAMPLES FROM A LIBRARIAN'S CORRESPONDENCE

"The great art o' letter-writin'"

A FEW years ago a certain library was undergoing a thorough cleaning at the hands of the painters, and among the librarian's correspondence at the time was the following poetical effusion :

An intellectual centre :

Pagan or Apostolic,
Ought not to need a Mentor
To warn from risk of colic.

When of paint the air is full,
The precaution shouldn't fail
(Which everywhere should be the rule),
To have water in a pail.

Placed in passages and rooms,
And floating therein straw,
T'absorb the noxious fumes,
And follow Hygeia's law.

P.S.—If at your weathercock you look
(Accept the notice, please),
You'll see it Nature seems to mock ;
It's out forty-five degrees.

And up to the present time the librarian has not decided whether his anonymous correspondent was right or wrong in his statement regarding the weathercock.

The following letter is typical of many that librarians receive, but the phraseology is original :

“ DEAR SIR,—I regret to report an accident to Library Book No. 13,693. Our dog has unfortunately developed a taste for learning and digested a few of the

leaves. Will you kindly let me know the cost of same, and oblige."

An illustration of the need for supernatural powers among librarians is shown in the following :

"DEAR SIR,—Please renew the book that I took out about two weeks ago, or it might be three. I forget the author and title, but it was bound in blue with a picture of a dolphin on the back."

In reply to an advertisement for an assistant librarian, a pseudonymous wit, doubtless impressed by the disparity between the numerous qualifications required and the meagre salary offered, submitted an application as follows :

"GENTLEMEN,—I beg to apply for the post of assistant librarian in your library.

"From my earliest years I have had a pronounced taste for literature. Before

I could talk, or walk with any degree of accuracy or precision, I devoured Bunyan, Thackeray, Dickens, the Family Bible, and sundry picture books with an eagerness that would have put many an older 'bookworm' to shame. In looking through my father's diary recently, I came across the following entry, written when I was quite a small child: 'The boy combines the taste of a literary connoisseur with the digestion of an ostrich; I wish he would choose a less expensive hobby.'

"Through my own unaided efforts a great impetus was given to the publishing trade, and, were it not for the fact that a restraining hand fell rather heavily on me at times, the output of books from the publishing houses of this country would have been much greater.

"During my schooldays this love of books did not forsake me. I kept my books

very near to my person—generally stowed away under an accommodating coat or jersey. I even hesitated to pry into the mysteries contained within their covers, until compelled to do so by an unsympathetic teacher who wilfully misunderstood my motives.

“ I relate these facts simply to show how natural it is that I, having now come to years of discretion, should seek to enter the profession of librarianship.

“ Although I am not a university graduate, I possess several educational certificates, and am learned in nearly every ‘ology’ and ‘ography’ known to man. Classification, cataloguing, and research work would, therefore, present no difficulties to me, and, without being unduly modest, I think I could safely say that I could paste a label in a book, or use a dating stamp the right side up.

“It is love of work rather than money that induces me to make this application, which I trust will receive the consideration it deserves.”

A more serious application for the position of junior library assistant (female), sixteen to twenty years of age, was received from a lady of something past middle age:

“SIR,—In answer to your advertisement for a junior library assistant, I beg to apply for the position. I admit I am not young, but I know a lot more than silly young girls who seem to spend most of their time in giggling. I have been a borrower from your library for some years, and I am sure I could carry out your duties.”

The librarian dared not take this application before his Committee for fear that he might be superseded.

The following request was sent to a college president in the United States, who very wisely referred the seeker after information to the nearest public library :

“ DEAR FRIEND,—I am trying to prepare a lecture on the greatness of the United States. I would like to have you or any other member of the faculty kindly suggest to me the best book on each of the following series :—The United States is great spiritually, morally, intellectually, æsthetically, historically, geographically, scientifically, industrially, commercially, financially, economically, politically, legally—in law—internationally—in its internal relations—socially, domestically—comforts in the home—the American family lives more comfortably than any other family in any country. This may be a little confusing, but I want to trea

the subject fully. Thanking you in advance."

In many libraries it is the custom to sell periodicals that are not required for filing purposes, as soon as they become out-of-date. The writer of the following letter evidently wanted to make sure of getting full value for his outlay. His offer, by the way, was declined.

"DEAR SIR,—I beg to tender the following offer for periodicals in Reading Room after their withdrawal from use, viz. :

The Connoisseur (publ. at 1s.) 1d. per copy.

The Studio (publ. at 1s.) 1d. , ,

Nineteenth Century (publ. at 2s. 6d.)

1d. per copy.

Of course it is understood that the copies shall be in a reasonably good condition."

The italics are ours.

The aspersion cast on the novelists mentioned in the following note, was quite unintentional :

“SIR,—Please send me one of the following—Lady Audley’s Secret, by Miss Braddon; Trilby, by Du Maurier; The Manxman, by Hall Caine; The Woman in White, by Collins; East Lynne, by Mrs Wood.

“If these are out, please send me a *good* novel.”

There are bound to be dissatisfied readers in every library, no matter how well or how ill that library is stocked; but the writer of the following epistle, in seeking to emphasize his protest, only succeeds in weakening it :

“DEAR SIR,—I believe you invite suggestions from readers. May I suggest

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that on November 5th next you make a bonfire of your books, and get in a stock of *new* books. I have had out some works of fiction that were written fifty years ago."

We leave the reader to judge whether this revolutionary policy would be quite fair to the memory of such novelists as Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, Lytton, Balzac, Dumas, and other standard writers of the nineteenth century.

POT POURRI

“The piebald miscellany”

PUZZLING notice on outside of Entrance Door of library: “Please keep this door closed.”

Elderly Lady (entering library and thrusting her lap-dog into the arms of an astonished attendant). “Please hold my dog while I go in to change my books; I see the notice says, ‘Dogs are not admitted.’”

Select “Guide Cards,” in an open access library :

About to Borrow.

Cable to Disraeli.

Page to Reade.

Reade to Steel.

Male Borrower (holding out to Lady Assistant the latest novelty in bookmarks).
“Please, miss, I wish you would tell some of your lady readers not to leave their fringe-nets in the books. I found a hair-pin in my last book, and a fringe-net in this one, and my wife is getting a bit suspicious.”

At a library at Hull a young girl was heard to whisper to her sister: “Don’t get one of Miss Braddon’s books. Ma will want to read it, and we shall have to wash up the supper things.”

It was the custom of a young woman, employed in a hat factory, to borrow two books from the library. On a certain evening she selected only one, saying: “I will only take one to-night, as I am going to church, and I don’t want to go in looking like a librarian.”

An ingenious and prophetic librarian in the United States posted the following notice over a collection of books: "Books by our next President." The collection included books by all three candidates.

FOR LIBRARIANS ONLY.—School of Arts.
Written applications, with references, to close 7 P.M. on the 7th instant, are invited for the position of *Caretaker, Librarian, and Billiard Marker.* Salary, £39 per annum, fuel, light, and quarters. Married couple preferred.

Borrower (addressing lady assistant).
"Will you please give me the book I left here this morning. I forget the name of it."

Assistant. "Who attended to you ? The librarian ? "

Borrower. "Oh, no ! It was a gentleman ! "

Absent-minded Borrower. “Who is the author of Scott’s ‘Marmion’?”

Defaulting Borrower (coming from bank into library). “How much interest have I to pay on this book?”

Another defaulter substituted for “fine” the word “forfeit,” which, although similar in meaning, is suggestive of “biting an inch from the end of a poker,” and “measuring love-lace,” rather than hard cash.

A would-be borrower, on being asked whether he wanted a fiction or non-fiction ticket, replied quite seriously, “a conviction.”

Notice—“Will the gentleman who took a horn-handled umbrella from the stand on Wednesday kindly return it to the librarian?” Underneath was pencilled: “Certainly not; weather still unsettled.”

In a reference library a reader filled in a form for Calvin's *Commentary on Job*. It is an old book rarely asked for, and is kept in an out-of-the-way corner of the building. Some time elapsed before the assistant appeared with the book; meanwhile the chief assistant, noticing the man at the counter, asked him what he wanted. "I'm waiting for a commentary on *Job*, but the fellow appears to have a *job* in getting it," was the reply.

Fiction Reader. "Have you one of O-u-i-da's books?"

The library assistant is always obliging. If proof of this is needed it is to be found in the following incident:

Borrower. "Have you *Who's Who?*?"

Assistant. "No, sir; but we have *Every Man's Own Lawyer*."

Motto for a Reference Library.—“ Six and eightpence saved at every consultation.”

Librarian (to visitor who is infringing the rules by smoking). “ If you want to smoke here you must go outside.”

Begging-Letter Writer (who has been plying his trade at the students’ table and is interrupted). “ Wot’s free libraries for, I should like ter know. I’ll write ter Mr Carnejee abaht this.”

Motto for Public Newsroom.—“ Abandon soap—ye may not enter here.”

Lady (coming out of public reading room, to friend). “ What a relief, now one can talk ! ”

“ Is that a picture of Bonaparte ? ” asked an inquiring reader. “ Oh, no,” replied the new library assistant, “ that’s a portrait of Napoleon.”

Dignified sub-librarian, clean-shaven, enters reference library and is approached by lady. "Do you know anything of my copy of *Homer* that I left here," said the lady. "No," replied the dignified official. "Oh, it doesn't matter," said the lady, "I expect the other boy will know."

Sub-librarian feels six inches shorter in height.

Visitor at Seaside Resort (to librarian):
"It may be a very nice book, but look what an atrocious cover it has; haven't you one bound in saxe-blue to match my costume? I really couldn't take a scarlet-covered book on to the promenade; people would mistake me for a salvation army lassie."

Borrower. "Will you give me a good author, please? One with large print."

SUGGESTED MENU FOR A LIBRARIAN'S
DINNER.

Savouries.

Devilled Brains.

Soups.

Red Pot(t)age à la Cholmondeley.
Thicker than Water à la Payn.

Fish.

Salmon (British Empire).
Hake (Paris Originals).

Entrée.

Heart of Midlothian.

Removés.

Roast Lamb. Boiled Bacon.
Chateau(briand) Potatoes.
Greens (Short History).

Sweets.

Tremendous Trifles à la Chesterton.
Lemon (Mark) Cream.

Dessert.

Dead Sea Fruit (Braddon).
Fruit between the Leaves (Wynter).

Indigestion.

A Forecast.—There was a knock at the front door, and the young people slid up the moving stairway, anticipating the parcel of books delivered each morning by the public library aeroplane service. They returned disconsolate; it was only the sterilized milk. “ You youngsters don’t know what hardships are,” said the elderly uncle, “ when I was a lad, back in 1913, I used to get up at nine o’clock in the morning, and walk the length of the street to get a book from a Carnegie library.”

Country Gentleman (*mistaking public library for the post office, and dropping letter into box*) *to janitor.* “ I hope it will go off to-night, young man.”

Juvenile Messenger (*to lady librarian*). “ Please will you give father *The Kiss of Helen.*”

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“Half the books in this library are not worth reading,” said a disagreeable, hyper-critical, novel-satiated woman. “Read the other half, then,” advised a bystander.

Novel Reader. “Have you any books printed by Marie Corelli?”

Applicant. “Please give me a joiner’s form.” (This is not related in any way to carpentry.)

It was the custom at a certain South London public lending library to call out the names of the borrowers as the books were ready to hand out. A borrower named Ellis failed to answer, whereupon the assistant called out, “Ellis, where art thou?” The dilatory borrower then came forward, greatly exasperated, and reported the assistant. The chief librarian, however, possessed the saving grace,

and the assistant was—well, bidden to be careful of his jokes.

Library Borrower (reporting damage).
“The cover *on* this book is damaged ; my dog has torn it off and swallowed it ! ”

A reader once asked for a book on Early Britain. “Will Church’s do,” said the librarian. “No,” replied the borrower, “general history, please.”

Illiterate Borrower. “Where do you keep the books on sickology (Psychology) ? ”

In the suggestion box of a library, the staff of which is mainly comprised of members of the gentler sex, the following modest proposal was placed : “That, as a special favour, a grateful borrower might be allowed to kiss all the members of the staff.” The suggestion was declined.

Query: Did "grateful borrower" enclose his photograph.

Lady (who has come rather late to the library lecture, and is unable to obtain a seat). "Disgraceful! They ought not to be allowed to advertise them so much."

Hebrew Proprietor of Circulating Library (inspecting volume returned). "See here, there is a hole on page 19 of my beautiful book—and there's another on page 20!"

A PARALLEL

Life is a volume, so they say,
And each page in it is a day.

'Tween covers all our days we crowd;
The blanket first, and last the shroud.

Glued to the "round" we crease and
fray,
Some leaves and sections break away.

In paper, cloth, or leather dressed,
The shoddiest binding looks the best.

Some but as pamphlets they go home,
And some a thick and heavy tome.

But few, or thick, or thin, I ween,
Show binding sound and pages clean.

Dog-eared and torn, and rubbed and
wan,

We meet the Great Librarian.

Ranged on his shelves, a battered crew,
Fit for the dust-heap, I and you.

M. Bantru, when travelling in Spain,
was presented to King Philip III., who
asked him if he had seen the Escurial.
“Yes, sire,” replied Bantru. “Well,
what do you think of the library ?” the

King asked. "I think, sire, that you should make your librarian Minister of Finances." "Why?" inquired the King. "Because," replied Bantru, "he has never touched anything entrusted to his care."

An American Hibernianism.—"My experience with public libraries is that the first volume of the book I inquire for is out, unless I happen to want the second, when that is out."—Holmes. *Poet at the Breakfast Table.*

Borrower (taking Browning's Poems in error). "Here, take this back, please; a hymn book is no use to me."

A Paradox.—Melvil Dewey, the well-known American librarian, said: "To my thinking, a great librarian must have a

clear head, a strong hand, and, above all, a great heart. Such shall be greatest among librarians ; and, when I look into the future, I am inclined to think that most of the men who will achieve this greatness will be women.”

Extract from Country Newspaper :
“The —— Library will close for two weeks, beginning August 25th, for the annual cleaning and vacation of the librarians.”

Reader (thinking of recent aeroplane accident). “Have you Darwin’s *Descent on Man?*”

Proud Councillor (showing visitor over library, and pointing to bookshelves). “This is where we keep the books.” Visitor, to whom this fact is very obvious,

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tries to assume an expression of wonderment.

Borrower (*returning book*). “Please give me the same book by another author.”

Patron of the Drama. “Can I see some of Macbeth’s works?” (Shakespeare insulted again.)

Printers’ Errors.—In a book of poetry there occurred the line, “See the pale martyr in a sheet of fire.” In its printed form it appeared as “See the pale martyr with his shirt on fire.”

One of the characters in a temperance novel was intended by the author to say, “drunkenness is folly”; the printer rendered it, “drunkenness is jolly.”

Reader (*returning “Tom Jones”*). “This book is not fit to be in the library. It’s

disgraceful that it should be lent to readers."

Librarian. "I'm sorry. We have one or two other books by the same author."

Reader (eagerly). "Are they in? Please let me have one."

Borrower. "Is the *Pilgrim's Progress* in?"

Librarian. "No, it's out."

Borrower. "Oh, well, give me one of Mark Twain's or W. W. Jacobs'."

In a case tried recently before a London magistrate, it was stated that a detective disguised himself as a library assistant in order to track down his quarry. The character of the disguise was not revealed; it may have been that the detective merely hid his feet behind a book-stack.

Binks. "Who's that nervous old man over there with the worried look?"

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Jinks. "That's Moneybags—the richest man in the town."

Binks. "What makes him look so worried?"

Jinks. "Why, he's afraid that Andrew Carnegie will give us a library, and the council will levy a penny rate to support it."

Love in the Library.—The assistant in charge of the reference department of a certain library noticed that a particular book was regularly perused, day after day, by a young man and a young woman alternately. They scarcely ever missed putting in an appearance, but their visits never coincided. The curiosity of the assistant was aroused, and one day he made a careful examination of the volume in question. He then discovered that, by the aid of what was evidently a pre-arranged code, the couple had been using

the book as a medium of communication with one another. Selected letters, words, and (in some instances) whole sentences had been underlined in such a way as to spell out, when strung together, a very good imitation of a regular love letter.

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